



[Frederick Engels, 1820 - 1895](#)

Freedom and Necessity

The attached item, also linked below, which is from Anti-Dühring, suffers from the occasional problem of that work: that it gives rather too much attention to Herr Dühring. The relevant part is mainly on page 5, which begins:

“Hegel was the first to state correctly the relation between freedom and necessity. To him, freedom is the insight into necessity (die Einsicht in die Notwendigkeit).

“Necessity is blind only in so far as it is not understood [begriffen].’

“Freedom does not consist in any dreamt-of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends.”

Freedom is the recognition of necessity. The Subject knows the Object, and is made free. This is the discovery of freedom in the Fundamental Question of Philosophy (i.e. the relation of mind to matter), and it is the only answer that we need from that Question. Preoccupation with the alleged primacy of the material over the human is a scholastic dispute that has no practical use.

Marx by Engels

Let us jump forward now to the third item in this part (we will return to it again in the next instalment), which is Engels' "Ludwig Feuerbach" in its fourth and final section, mainly dealing with Engels' friend Karl Marx, who had died three years prior to the publication of this work of Engels'.

Says Engels:

"Out of the dissolution of the Hegelian school, however, there developed still another tendency, the only one which has borne real fruit. And this tendency is essentially connected with the name of Marx (1).

"The separation from Hegelian philosophy was here also the result of a return to the materialist standpoint. That means it was resolved to comprehend the real world — nature and history — just as it presents itself to everyone who approaches it free from preconceived idealist crotchets. It was decided mercilessly to sacrifice every idealist fancy which could not be brought into harmony with the facts conceived in their own and not in a fantastic interconnection. And materialism means nothing more than this."

Yes, materialism was crucial to Marx's theories. Materialism gazed mercilessly at the objective universe from the point of view of the free individual human being. But this did not amount to an elevation of the material universe to the status of a "prime mover" God, progenitor of life and breather of spirit into man. Materialism means nothing more than reality, as opposed to fantasy; reality, as looked upon mercilessly by the human Subject.

The remainder of Part 4 of "Ludwig Feuerbach" develops into one of those grand sweeping overviews of which both Engels and Marx were capable. In this case science, philosophy and class politics are interwoven in an undoubtedly dialectical way.

There is also a typically self-deprecating footnote by Engels about Karl Marx and their relationship, but here Engels may be too close to the action to be able to make a correct judgement. The full truth is surely not contained in these few words of his. The political contribution of any comrade, in total, is an unknowable quantity. Comparisons between one comrade and another are generally odious. Engels' contribution is undoubted, and his contribution to this CU topic of "Philosophy, Religion, and Revolution" and of Hegel in particular is proportionately greater than any other, because he was involved with it from the early 1840s, before he met Marx, and because he took care to write about it after Marx passed away.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Engels, Anti-Dühring, Chapter 11, Freedom and Necessity, 1877.](#)
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